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English Studies

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“All Magic Comes with a Price”

Rumplestiltskin’s Character Arc in *Once Upon a Time*

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**ABSTRACT**

*Olipa kerran* (2011–2018) on amerikkalainen fantasiasarja, jossa kuuluisat satuhahmot on kirottu asumaan toiseen maailmaan. Yksi sarjan päähahmoista ja antagonisteista on Rumplestiltskin, joka perustuu kolmeen eri satuhahmoon: Grimmin veljesten Tittelintuureen, *Kaunottaren ja Hirviön* hirviöön, sekä *Peter Panin* krokotiiliin. Tutkielmassani tutkin, kuinka Rumplestiltskinin hahmo kehittyy ja muuttuu kolmen ensimmäisen tuotantokauden aikana. Rumplestiltskin on monipuolinen hahmo, joka liikkuu hyvän ja pahan rajamailla koko sarjan ajan. Tutkin kohtauksia, joissa hän valitsee hyvän ja pahan väliltä.

Materiaalinani on 19 kohtausta, jotka analysoin ja määrittelin Porterin, Larsonin, Harthcockin ja Nellisin Scene Function Model -teorian mukaan. Lajittelin kohtaukset kuuteen eri kategoriaan sen mukaan, mikä niiden funktio osana juonta on. Suurin osa kohtauksistani sijoittuu juonessa jakson loppupuolelle, *crisis*- ja *resolution*-kohtauksiin, joissa Rumplestiltskin joko on konfliktissa tai päättää miten reagoi konfliktin lopputulokseen. Huomattavaa on, että valtaosa konflikteista tapahtuu hänen päänsä sisällä, kun hän on kriisissä omien prioriteettien ja pelkojensa kanssa.

Lisäksi tutkin Rumplestiltskinin näkyvimpiä ominaispiirteitä ja miten ne muuttivat muotoaan kolmen ensimmäisen kauden aikana. Määrittelin viisi piirrettä, jotka vaikuttivat hänen päätöksiinsä: pelkuruus, vallanhimoisuus, kostonhaluisuus, manipulointi ja epäluotettavuus, sekä perhesuuntautuneisuus. Pelkuruudesta hän ei pääse koskaan yli, mutta piilottaa sen haalimalla valtaa, jonka avulla hän voi pelotella ja kontrolloida muita. Lähes kaikki hänen toimistaan liittyvät perheeseen, mutta perheensä vuoksi hän tekee monia kyseenalaisia valintoja, jotka vahingoittavat muita ihmisiä. Hän kosta jokaisen kohtaamansa vääryyden raa'asti, manipuloi tilanteita mielensä mukaan, eikä opi olemaan rehellinen edes läheisilleen. Mitä ikinä Rumplestiltskin tekee, hän harvoin tekee päätöstä, josta ei itse hyödy tavalla tai toisella.

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**KEYWORDS:** television narrative, villain, character arc, character traits, *Once Upon a Time*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

Belle:                    You really are as dark as people say.  
 Rumplestiltskin: Darker, dearie. Much darker.  
 (*Once Upon a Time* #2.19)

From old folk tales to contemporary Disney films, villains are an important part of the story. They challenge our perceptions of right and wrong, fascinate with their personalities, and bring an interesting twist to the tale. With the current popularity of television serials, a longer narrative can take viewers deeper into the background of their favorite villains and also give the antagonists a chance to get more screen time and develop throughout the seasons.

In this thesis, I study Rumplestiltskin's character arc in the first three seasons of the ABC fantasy drama series *Once Upon a Time* (2011–2018). Within the story, an arc is each character's own personal plot which follows their journey from one event to another (Newman 2006: 23). My aim is to analyze how Rumplestiltskin's character development during the first three seasons is presented in the narrative. I selected the seasons 1–3 as my material because they contain the storyline that presents Rumplestiltskin's background and the events that made him choose evil. He changes from an ordinary, humble person into one of the main villains, but he is a contradictory character, who often fights along the heroes of the story.

The research material consists of scenes where Rumplestiltskin faces a decision and chooses between good and evil, either power and darkness or love and family. I study which his most notable character traits are, how they affect his behavior and how they change their shape as the arc progresses. A trait is a unique attribute the character possesses, and thus fictional characters are typically remembered by their most descriptive traits (Chatman 1978: 123). Although Rumplestiltskin is nearly an omnipotent character who has influence in most of the events occurring, and he causes harm to various other characters, in this study, I include scenes that have a relevance and an effect on Rumplestiltskin's personal story arc.

I use the Scene Function Model created by M. J. Porter, D. L. Larson, Allison Harthcock and K. B. Nellis (2002) to analyze the functions of the kernel scenes where Rumplestiltskin chooses between good and evil during the first three seasons of the series. According to Seymour Chatman (1978: 53), kernel scenes are scenes that are relevant to the plot, and they cannot be omitted without modifying the narrative. A few previous studies have discussed fairy tale adaptation to television narrative using the Scene Function Model. These include Eleanor Hodapp's thesis on Snow White and Evil Queen characters in *Once Upon a Time* (2016), as well as Margaret Lundberg's analysis of Cinderella in television (2013).

I study how the function of the scene affects Rumplestiltskin's behavior and analyze whether there are visible patterns in the same type of scenes. I selected 19 scenes, which I analyze in the chronological order of the events. This enables following the development of the traits. I place each scene under one of the six functions defined in the Scene Function Model: *disturbance*, *obstacle*, *complication*, *confrontation*, *crisis* or *resolution*. All the scenes can be viewed from the perspective of any of the characters present in the scene, and thus the function of the scene can differ. In this study, the focus is on Rumplestiltskin's point of view to the events that occur and how they develop his story arc. Additionally, one scene can have several functions, but I choose the one that is the most relevant in the context.

I selected my material by watching through the first three seasons of *Once Upon a Time* and writing down all the scenes where Rumplestiltskin's traits were visible. I narrowed down the material by choosing scenes where his traits affect his decisions. To conduct my analysis, I study how the traits change in the longer arc and how the change is presented in the narrative. I see what kind of kernel scenes affect his traits the most and what kind of patterns emerge between the scene functions.

*Once Upon a Time* tells about fairy tale characters who have been cursed to live in our world, in a fictional small town called Storybrooke in Maine, without the memories of their previous identities. The stories and characters are based on the traditional and well-known fairy tales, but they are modified, even to the point where some famously good

characters might be evil and vice versa. Each of the seven seasons has their own unique style and the series evolves considerably in the later seasons as the story progresses. My focus is on the first three seasons, which are summarized later in the introduction. They describe Rumplestiltskin's background and show major life events ranging from his father abandoning him as a child to his marriage with Belle, the princess from *Beauty and the Beast*.

Rumplestiltskin (also known as Rumple) is one of the main characters in the series during all the seven seasons. The character is based on the antagonist in Grimm's fairy tale *Rumpelstilzchen* (translated in English as *Rumpelstiltskin*) from 1812; however, the name's spelling differs slightly in *Once Upon a Time*. Starting from humble origins, Rumplestiltskin consumes a great deal of dark magic and becomes a powerful trickster, who manipulates people as he pleases and causes fear all around him. After a curse takes the fairy tale characters to another world without memory of their previous identities, he becomes Mr. Gold, an influential and mysterious pawnbroker, who still manages to frighten the other residents. Although he is strongly characterized by untrustworthiness, he is also a contradictory character, who believes he has a justification for his evil deeds. He can be categorized as a round character and he fluctuates between good and evil throughout the entire series.

E. M. Forster (2002: 4–5, 55) defines that a character is round when it has several qualities and it is capable of surprising and changing. Thus, also the traits of a round character can change their shape as his or her story arc progresses. In the longest form, an arc can follow the character throughout their entire lifespan, or it can be divided into smaller periods in the narrative. (Newman 2006: 23) The longer the arc, the more the character has a chance to learn and develop along it.

Visual storytelling differs from literary texts as it consists of two information channels, visual and auditory, that together create the narrative for television series and films (Chatman 1978: 158). Watching series has become a popular leisure activity in the past decades, but with the advancement of technology, it has changed its form. The viewing experience has moved more and more from television to online, when Netflix and other



streaming platforms have gained a wide audience. Online, people can watch their favorite programs when and where they want to without being tied to the television schedules. Moreover, it is possible to binge in the entire season, and not wait for a week for the next episode to air. While technology has brought more freedom to the viewing options, series and serials continue to fascinate people, and similar narrative structures and theories apply.

Fantasy is a unique genre that allows one's imagination to run wild. According to literary scholar Tzvetan Todorov (1975: 25–26), the fantastic occurs when the reader or viewer hesitates between natural and supernatural explanation for the events. Fairy tales are comprised of fantastic elements, but there is no need for hesitation. The implied audience knows that magic is a natural part of the narrative and nearly anything can happen if thus is earlier in the tale prophesied or cursed. Todorov (1975: 54) categorizes the fairy tales into the genre of marvelous, where supernatural events are an everyday phenomenon both for the characters and for the readers. *Once Upon a Time* dives into this world with its plots that take their inspiration from well-known fairy tales, and hence the viewers know that in the series, too, rules can be bent and anything is possible.

I continue the chapter with an introduction of the material for this thesis by summarizing the first three seasons of *Once Upon a Time* and by presenting the character of Rumplestiltskin and Mr. Gold. In the second chapter, I discuss villains in fairy tales and the fantasy genre. Furthermore, I write about the theory of television narrative and character studies. In chapter 3, I analyze the research material, and finally, the conclusions are presented in chapter 4.

### 1.1 *Once Upon a Time*

*Once Upon a Time* is an American drama series that aired on ABC for seven seasons from 2011 to 2018. Nearly all the characters in the series have two names and roles: their original fairy tale identity and its Storybrooke counterpart. All the episodes consist of two major plotlines. The first one tells the present-day events in Storybrooke, Maine, where

the fairy tale characters have been residing for 28 years. The second plot shows flashbacks from the Enchanted Forest, introducing the characters and their pasts to the viewers. As the seasons advance, the main characters travel through various realms and meet fictional characters from different fairy tales and stories.

The primary material in this thesis are the seasons 1–3. Each of these seasons consist of 22 episodes, and the character of Rumplestiltskin is present in the majority of them. The seasons were aired for the first time in the United States between 2011 and 2014. The release in Finland happened a year after the original, and the seasons 1–3 were aired on the channel Nelonen from 2012 to 2015. (IMDb 2020)

Most of the episodes in the first season introduce a new character, revealing to the viewers who they were in the Enchanted Forest. The main characters' Storybrooke and fairy tale identities, as well as their relations to each other, are presented in a family tree in an appendix at the end of this thesis. The series begins when 11-years old Henry Mills runs away to Boston to meet his biological mother, Emma Swan, in an attempt to bring her to Storybrooke and make her believe in magic. Emma is the daughter of Snow White and Prince Charming, and she was sent to our world as a baby before the curse was enacted in order for her to be the savior who comes to break the curse 28 years later. Henry has been raised by her adopted mother Regina, who is Snow White's stepmother, the Evil Queen, and the mayor of Storybrooke. Besides Regina who cast the curse, Mr. Gold is the only one who knows about it and remembers his previous identity. The season ends when Emma starts believing in magic and breaks the curse with a true love's kiss to Henry.

The second season begins when the curse is broken and the residents of Storybrooke finally gain back their memories. Concurrently, Mr. Gold brings magic to Storybrooke in an attempt to find his son, Baelfire, who fell through a portal to a land without magic when he was young. With the help of magic, Gold manages to locate Baelfire—in this world known as Neal—and is surprised to learn that Neal is Emma's ex-boyfriend and Henry's father. At the end of the second season, Henry is abducted and taken to Neverland, and the heroes set on a quest to save him and bring him back home.

The events in the first half of the third season take place in Neverland, which is dominated by evil Peter Pan and his Lost Boys. Pan needs to find the heart of the truest believer to gain immortality and restore magic on the island. Suspecting Henry to be the truest believer, he plots Henry to believe that he has good intentions, for Henry to voluntarily donate his heart to save the island. Peter Pan is revealed to be Rumplestiltskin's father who abandoned him as a child for eternal youth. In the past, Rumplestiltskin met a seer who gave him a prophecy that once he is reunited with his son, a little boy will be his undoing and cause his death. Although fearing death, Rumplestiltskin wants to be a better father than his father was and redeem his mistake of abandoning Baelfire as a child, and thus helps the others to save his grandson. Thinking that they have defeated Pan, the heroes return to Storybrooke. However, Pan tricks them and joins them disguised as Henry. Ultimately, Mr. Gold kills his father and sacrifices himself by stabbing both of them with his magical dagger, the only thing that can kill him.

After defeating Pan, the second half of the third season features Zelena, the Wicked Witch of the West, as the main villain. The other characters think that Mr. Gold is dead, but Zelena keeps him as a prisoner in a cage and controls him with the dagger. Gold begins slowly to go mad but manages to break free, as Neal sacrifices himself for his father. Zelena is supposedly killed and the season gets a happy ending with Rumplestiltskin's and Belle's wedding in the season finale.

## 1.2 From Rumplestiltskin to Mr. Gold

The character of Rumplestiltskin is portrayed by Scottish actor Robert Carlyle (ABC 2019). Although Rumplestiltskin constantly assists the heroes with his extensive knowledge and magic, he is considered an unreliable character and one of the main villains in the series. Back in the Enchanted Forest, he acquires the roles of three fairy tale characters: Rumpelstiltskin, The Beast from *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), and Crocodile from *Peter Pan* (1953). The three roles are merged in one character, and they coexist simultaneously. He gets his name after Grimm's fairy tale *Rumpelstiltskin*, and like the imp in the fairy tale, he makes deals and spins straw into gold. Additionally, he

is known as “The Beast”, a man who has turned into a beast whose humanity only love can restore. Eventually, he falls in love with Belle, a protagonist from the story *Beauty and the Beast*. Lastly, his rivalry with Captain Hook leads Hook to name him “Crocodile” because of his scaly skin. In *Peter Pan*, Crocodile was the one who devoured Captain Hook’s hand, making the two of them archenemies. However, Rumplestiltskin never actually morphs into a crocodile, but the role can be viewed as metaphorical.

Rumplestiltskin is a cunning trickster who makes deals with unsuspecting victims. The deal always comes with a twist, for example in exchange for happiness in the present, one needs to give away their firstborn child in the future. People make deals out of desperation, without thinking of the consequences that come to them later. Rumplestiltskin’s most famous saying is “All magic comes with a price”, which he repeats throughout the series as a warning to others.

In the Enchanted Forest, Rumplestiltskin gains his excessive power by becoming the Dark One, an immortal being that is the source of a great deal of dark magic. He quickly grows addicted to the magic, which makes him the most powerful and manipulative character in the series. Dark One’s powers are tied to a dagger that possesses the current Dark One’s name. Should another person acquire the dagger, they can control the Dark One to do their bidding. The only way to kill the Dark One is to stab them with the dagger, in which case the killer gets their name engraved on the dagger.

After the Evil Queen casts the dark curse that takes the fairy tale characters to Storybrooke, Rumplestiltskin becomes Mr. Gold, a pawnbroker and antiques dealer who appears to own most of the town. Other residents treat him with respect mixed with fear and mistrust and avoid doing business with him. He learns to remember his previous identity as Rumplestiltskin, as he was the one who helped Regina to create the curse, hoping to find his son whom he knows to be living in the land without magic. Nevertheless, it takes him a few decades and a broken curse to finally be reunited with Baelfire.

The difference in the appearance of Mr. Gold and his fairy tale counterpart is notable. After becoming the Dark One, Rumplestiltskin's looks begin to transform along with his darkening soul. His skin becomes scaly and bronze colored, as can be seen in Image 1. He dresses up in leather and has long curly hair. His voice is high-pitched, and he likes to sing and talk in riddles and rhymes. Additionally, he produces gleeful utterances and rapid movements, especially using his hands. The actor himself describes the character child-like and says that Rumplestiltskin is formed from the mask that he puts on with the heavy make-up, the movements based on Italian performance, and the babbling speech, which create his cunning appearance (Edwards & Clubb 2016: 73–74).



**Image 1.** Rumplestiltskin (*Once Upon a Time* #2.4)



**Image 2.** Mr. Gold (*Once Upon a Time* #2.1)

Mr. Gold, on the other hand, has a tidy appearance that creates an idea of an elderly gentleman and a businessman. He always dresses up in a suit no matter where he is, and his long hair is gray and straight. His voice is notably lower, and his British accent is audible. He limps and walks with a cane, as a memory from injuring his own leg. Unlike the joyful Rumpelstiltskin, Mr. Gold has a serious face and rarely shows strong emotions (see Image 2. above).

## 2 FAIRY TALES, CHARACTERS AND TELEVISION NARRATIVE

Villains are present practically in all tales, and already children get acquainted with them in bedtime stories. Every hero needs an antagonist to challenge them and make their story more interesting. In this chapter, I discuss the villains' purpose in the stories and provide the background stories of fairy tale characters Rumpelstiltskin, the Beast and Crocodile. Furthermore, I discuss the fantasy genre and the television narrative. Lastly, I finish the chapter by writing about character development.

### 2.1 Fairy Tale Villains

Children all around the world grow up listening to fairy tales about ancient kingdoms, valiant princes and beautiful princesses, heroes and villains. Although the stories provide entertainment, it is not their sole purpose. They educate children about various matters, teach about morality and the distinction between right and wrong, and might even scare and help to overcome fears. (Ashliman 2004 2–4)

The origin of the well-known fairy tales dates back centuries to the traditional oral folktales. Similar tales were told in different continents in different eras, and therefore it is nearly impossible to pinpoint the original version of most of the currently known stories. (Swann Jones 2002: 3) The Brothers Grimm collected and wrote down over a hundred oral tales and published them as a fairy tale collection between 1812 and 1815 (Teverson 2013: 103–104). However, these tales were gruesome and contained themes such as child abuse, sex, extreme violence and incest, which would not be found in the majority of contemporary children's literature (Greenspan 2018). The punishment of villains did not involve mercy and often resembled torture (Tatar 1992: 7). Each fairy tale shares the culture and values of the time from which they originated, and thus the tales have been rewritten to better correspond to the values and morals of their era (Tatar 1992: 19–20).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *villain* as a character “whose evil motives or actions form an important element in the plot” (2020). Mike Alsford (2006: 106–107) argues that villains do not consent to the rules of society, and one of their distinctive features is the will to have power over others. Alsford (2006: 95) further argues that it is the freedom and individualism of villains that continues to fascinate people, despite their wrongdoings.

Vladimir Propp has studied Russian wonder tales extensively and published his well-known morphology in 1928. He defines roles for the main characters in the story, as well as functions for the acts of the *dramatis personae*. However, function does not mean the same as action, and an identical act can serve different functions depending on its significance for the situation. Not all the functions are present in all tales, but when they do, their order is always identical. (Propp 1928: 9–10)

Villain is a role that can be found in nearly all tales. According to Propp, the villain’s function is “to disturb the peace of a happy family, to cause some form of misfortune, damage, or harm” (1928: 15). During his [sic] first appearance, the villain seeks information and receives the answer he was looking for. Next, he performs a trickery in disguise, and the victim falls into it, accidentally assisting the villain. (Propp 1928: 15–17)

A major turning point in the progress of a tale is the act of villainy, when the villain manages to cause harm. Villainy can occur in many different forms: abduction or imprisonment, physical injury, murder or casting a spell, to name a few. A narrative climax is reached when the hero and villain confront each other in a battle, which ends with the defeat of the villain. Occasionally, the villain makes a last appearance, after which he or she is punished, and the story ends with the hero’s wedding and coronation. (Propp 1928: 17–20, 33–35, 42–43)

Although Propp’s morphology is created on the basis of Russian folk tales, similar functions are found in modern fairy tale adaptations. Villains still appear camouflaged to create havoc around them, they fight against the hero, and they rarely gain a victory.



However, the boundaries between good and evil have become more obscure. There are stories where the villain is the main character and their background and what made them become evil is shown to the audience, such as in the popular films *Maleficent* (2014) and *Joker* (2019). *Once Upon a Time* also serves as an example of this in giving voice to the villains and showing how their lives have brought them to where they are now. During one season, a character may be considered the main villain, and in the next one, they might be fighting the evil alongside the heroes. The series also shows that in the right circumstances, anyone is capable of acting evil.

## 2.2 Rumpelstiltskin, the Beast and Crocodile

Tales about an imp called Rumpelstiltskin have been known to exist since the sixteenth century around Europe, but the most well-known version of the fairy tale was written by the Brothers Grimm and published in 1812 (Pook Press 2018). It tells about a miller's daughter, whose father sends her to spin straw into gold for the king; failing to do so, she will be killed. The daughter weeps in desperation, when a strange little man appears and offers to spin the straw for her in exchange for her jewelry. The same happens in the following two nights, until the daughter has nothing more to offer. He promises to help her for the last time, in exchange for her firstborn child. Upon seeing the gold, the king marries the miller's daughter. A year after the wedding their baby is born, and the man comes back for his price. The queen promises him richness if she could only keep the child, hence the man tells that he will not take her baby if she guesses his name in three days. The queen searches through the kingdom for all the possible names, until her messenger overhears the man chanting a poem that mentions his name. The following day the queen guesses that his name is Rumpelstiltskin, which drives Rumpelstiltskin to his own demise. (Grimm 2019)

The first version of the tale *Beauty and the Beast* was written in 1740 by French author Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve (Andrews 2017). The references to the story in *Once Upon a Time* are based on the popular Disney animation from 1991 (IMDb 2019). It tells about an arrogant prince, who refuses to offer shelter to an enchantress disguised

as an old woman because of her ugliness. As a revenge, she transforms him to a monstrous beast and leaves him a cursed rose. His only way to be changed back into a human being is to learn to love and get someone to love him before the last petal of the rose falls. After the Beast imprisons her father, a woman named Belle agrees to save him by taking his place and moving into the castle as a prisoner. As time goes by, Belle and the Beast grow closer to each other. When the Beast is stabbed and is dying, Belle professes her love towards him. True love makes him revive and transform back into human, and they live together happily ever after.

The third identity Rumpelstiltskin has is the crocodile from *Peter Pan* created by J. M. Barrie (Picardie 2016). The original tale was written in 1904, and Disney's popular animation film was released in 1953. In the story, the crocodile is Captain Hook's enemy, and thus generally on the same side as Peter Pan. The crocodile devours Captain Hook's hand and after getting the taste of him, he desires to eat more of his flesh and chases him around. Unfortunately, the crocodile has also eaten an alarm clock, which constantly ticks in his stomach and warns Hook of his presence. (Disney Wiki; Bauer & Lowne 2020)

None of the aforementioned three villains is, however, characterized as purely evil: the Beast transforms into a handsome prince and the story ends happily for him; Rumpelstiltskin assists the poor miller's daughter to become a queen and is unable to cause harm; the crocodile fights against the main villain of the story. Blakeney (2010) notes that a great number of villains in literature were not born evil, but the circumstances in their life, the injustice they faced, and the way society treated them darkened their soul. Similarly, in *Once Upon a Time*, villainry is a controversial construct.

*Once Upon a Time* is a highly intertextual series, which means it contains references and allusions to other existing texts (Montgomery, Durant, Fabb, Furniss & Mills 2007: 161). The entire series was created based on other texts, as it merges well-known fairy tales and throws the characters from them to live in the modern world. Viewers who are familiar with fairy tales are able to recognize the allusions to the popular tales. Rumpelstiltskin's character arc intertwines elements from the three stories that the character is based on. He spins straw into gold and makes deals like Grimm's Rumpelstiltskin, while he lives in the

Beast's castle with Belle as his caretaker. In Storybrooke, too, allusions to fairy tales appear, such as the chipped teacup from *Beauty and the Beast*, which is Mr. Gold's most valuable possession in his pawn shop. Even the name, Mr. Gold, is an allusion to the original Rumpelstiltskin's ability to create gold out of straw.

### 2.3 Fantasy

*Once Upon a Time* can be classified as a fantasy series, as it conforms with most of the norms associated with the genre. The series mixes together reality and fairy tales, which are a common example of stories filled with fantastic elements. However, fantasy as a genre covers a more diverse ground, and fantastic aspects are found in literature ranging from detective stories to horror fiction (Rabkin 1979: 126–128).

Tzvetan Todorov was one of the leading scholars in the field, and his definition of the fantastic has been widely acknowledged (Jackson 2003: 5). Todorov defines the fantastic as the hesitation readers and viewers experience, when they are not certain whether the events that occur are due to natural or supernatural causes. Therefore, Todorov argues that genuine fantastic rarely lasts throughout the work, for the answer to the cause of hesitation is generally revealed by the end of the narrative. (Todorov 1975: 25–26)

Todorov states that a text can be categorized as fantastic if it fulfills three conditions. Firstly, the reader needs to consider the text as otherwise realistic and hesitate whether the strange events are natural or supernatural. Secondly, a character can be the one hesitating, in which case the reader follows the events through the character's eyes and shares his or her hesitation. However, the second condition is not mandatory for a work to be fantastic, although it is fulfilled in most cases. Thirdly, the reader cannot interpret the text as allegorical or poetic. (Todorov 1975: 31–33)

In *Once Upon a Time*, the hesitation is primarily experienced by one of the protagonists, Emma. She arrives in Storybrooke and her son, Henry, tries to convince her that fairy tales and magic are real, and each resident of the town is in reality one of the well-known

fairy tale characters. She refuses to believe that she would be the daughter of Snow White and Prince Charming, and she fights hard to find a natural explanation to all the strange incidents that occur. Besides Henry, only a few other characters know the truth about the curse, and some of the other residents hesitate as well, but their doubts are not followed to the same extent as Emma's. The viewers, on the contrary, do not need to hesitate, as they are led to believe that the fairy tale land is real in the series. The past events in the Enchanted Forest are shown in flashbacks as events that have actually happened. At the end of the first season, Emma stops hesitating and starts believing, and consequently, the curse is broken.

The reader is rarely left to hesitate whether the events are natural or supernatural until the end of the story, and hence, the fantastic comes to an end. If the extraordinary phenomena can be explained by natural causes, the work is categorized into the genre of *uncanny*. If, on the other hand, the events are inexplicable by the laws of reality, the work is considered *marvelous*. Additionally, some texts can be placed on the borderlines of two genres, and they create their own sub-genres: *fantastic-uncanny* and *fantastic-marvelous*. (Todorov 1975: 41, 44)

According to Todorov (1975: 54), supernatural events occur in marvelous texts, but neither the reader nor the characters question their existence. Fairy tales are a common example of the genre of marvelous. We accept the talking animals, the magical kingdoms and powerful villains without considering their plausibility, as we know them to be an essential part of the genre. (Todorov 1975: 54) Similarly as fairy tales, *Once Upon a Time*, which borrows the elements from fairy tales, fills the criteria of a marvelous story. The viewers acknowledge that magic is a part of the series, and they are willing to accept without hesitation the supernatural events taking place in Storybrooke and in other realms.

Rosemary Jackson (2003: 32) suggests that instead of being a genre on its own, the fantastic is a literary mode, which is placed between the modes of the marvellous and the mimetic. Marvellous texts, such as fairy tales, have an omniscient, impersonal narrator, who typically tells about events that have taken place a long time ago in faraway

kingdoms, and the reader is to believe that everything happened as is told. The mimetic texts have a third-person narrator who imitates the real world with fictional events taking place within an external reality. The fantastic mode, then, is on the borderlines of real and imaginary. It includes a narrator who is as uncertain about the reality of the events as the reader is, and this serves to create the uncertain, fantastic effect. (Jackson 2003: 33–35)

Eric S. Rabkin (1979: 31) notes that fantastic texts are derived from three different narrative sources: myths, folk tales and fairy tales. Myths originate from prehistoric times, when they were considered sacred and their creator was unknown. Their purpose was to offer an alternative world to escape from reality. As culture changed, myths were shaped from their sacred status into man-made folk tales that were told orally primarily for entertainment. Fairy tales were then formed of the most popular oral tales. Rabkin states that the style of narrative depends on the audience of the era, and over time the fantastic narratives have become more conventionalized, more sophisticated and more allegorical. (Rabkin 1979: 31–32)

Steven Swann Jones (2002: 11–12) argues that fantasy is found in fairy tales as an expression of our unconscious minds. Fairy tales tackle the issues of our everyday lives by dramatizing them with metaphorical and symbolic meanings. Compared to the conscious, rational world, analogical tales offer a different kind of viewing of the world. Through fantasy, thus, fairy tales give an insight to our psyche and manifest the unconscious dreams and thoughts in an easily perceivable way. (Swann Jones 2002: 11–12)

Another reading of fantasy's purpose in fairy tales defines that it is a sign of spiritual life in the form of miracles. Whether one believes that the sources of fantastic are divine or supernatural makes no great difference, the key point is the moral aspect of the stories. Magical objects and fairies appear to the protagonists during the difficult times and help them to overcome their problems. Fantasy, then, creates an image of a moral world, where good deeds are rewarded and evil is punished. (Swann Jones 2002: 13–14) Whichever the purpose of the fantastic in stories may be, fantasy has established its place within the literary genres and keeps on fascinating people in various written and audiovisual tales.

## 2.4 Television Narrative

Television programs can be categorized into series and serials based on their narrative structure in the episodes. TV-series have independent episodes that do not require previous knowledge about the show for the viewers to understand the events. TV-serial, on the contrary, means that the plot continues from one episode to another, and the viewer is advised to watch all the episodes in a chronological order, in order to be able to follow the plot and avoid missing major events and significant kernel scenes. In addition to the viewers' memory, also the characters remember the past events and are expected to learn from their past mistakes. Therefore, in comparison to episodic television series that do not require long-term memory, serials with continuous narrative have more opportunities for character development throughout the seasons. (Porter et al. 2002: 2; García 2016: 6)

*Once Upon a Time* falls under the definition of an episodic serial. The characters maintain the knowledge and memory of the events that have occurred in the preceding episodes and in other realms. However, each episode consists of two main plotlines and a few smaller ones, and the plotlines end in a closure and answers are revealed at the end of each episode. Some questions, or a teaser, are left open to keep the audience interested and to continue following the plot in the next episode.

Not all the scenes can move the plot forward equally. Seymour Chatman (1978: 53–54) defines two kinds of events in the narrative: kernels and satellites. In a television narrative, kernel events are the scenes that advance the plot, as well as have a significant effect on the character arcs. A kernel scene cannot be omitted without altering the plotline. Kernels provide the characters with two or more paths to choose, and the plot continues according to their decision. (Chatman 1978: 53)

Unlike kernel scenes, satellites are not essential to the progress of the plot. They are often used to describe the interaction and relationship between the characters. Should a satellite scene be omitted, the plot would remain understandable. However, instead of affecting the plot, satellites show interesting details and provide depth to the story, and thus

removing them could weaken the quality of the narrative. (Chatman 1978: 54; Porter et al. 2002: 4)

To analyze the meaning of scenes in constructing the narrative of television serials, Porter, Larson, Harthcock and Nellis created the Scene Function Model which defines the purpose of kernel and satellite scenes. Not all the functions are present in an episode or in the entire story, and one scene can also serve several functions, or have a different function for different characters. There are six functions for kernel scenes and twelve functions for satellite scenes. (Porter et al. 2002: 4–5) The functions are presented below.

I present the kernel scene functions by using as an example *Once Upon a Time*'s episode #1.8 “Desperate Souls”, whose secondary plotline includes all the six kernel functions in flashbacks that tell about Rumplestiltskin's past. *Disturbance* is a function that introduces the problem the protagonist needs to overcome and creates the setting for the story (Porter et al. 2002: 9–10). In the *disturbance* scene, Rumplestiltskin hears for the first time that all the children will be enlisted to the war at the age of fourteen. His son, Baelfire, will turn fourteen in a few days, and he is afraid of losing him. The news disturbs their lives and shows the problem that he attempts to solve during the episode.

*Obstacle* is a function that reveals the opposition, or the obstacle the hero needs to overcome to reach their goal. The antagonist is typically presented in this scene. (Porter et al. 2002: 10) Rumplestiltskin attempts to run away with Baelfire, but they get caught by the king's men, who humiliate him. He is too weak and afraid to fight back or even stand up for himself, and his own cowardice is the obstacle that he needs to overcome to save his son from the war. In a function called *complication*, a new twist is introduced to the plot to complicate the situation (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Rumplestiltskin meets a beggar, who tells him that instead of running away, he should fight. The beggar tells about the existence of a dagger that contains magical powers and suggests that Rumplestiltskin should steal it from a castle. This complicates his story, because he needs to find a way to acquire the dagger and to overcome his cowardice.

In *confrontation*, the protagonist confronts their obstacle (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Rumplestiltskin sets the castle on fire and steals the dagger. The most important action scene, the climax of the story, is known as the *crisis*, when the two sides have their final conflict that solves the situation one way or another (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Rumplestiltskin faces the Dark One in the climactic scene, and he finds the courage to kill the immortal being and obtain his powers. Finally, in the last kernel scene function called *resolution*, the outcome of the crisis is revealed (Porter et al. 2002: 10). In the final scene of Rumplestiltskin's plot line, he has overcome his fear and absorbed the powers, and he slaughters all the king's men who come to fetch Baelfire to the war.

Satellite scenes bring depth to the story without altering the plot meaningfully. *Exposition* is a scene that reveals information from the past. *Dramatic* builds intensity by showing additional, nonessential details related to the main conflict of the story, for example, by showing how kidnappers treat their hostages. *Introduction of new character* is one of the functions as well. In *action*, the characters are executing their plan. This category includes car chase and break-in scenes. The hero presents how they plan to overcome their problem in a function called *plan revealed*. *Relationship affirmation* shows interaction between the characters without presenting major developments in their relationship. (Porter et al. 2002: 10–11)

A function called *clarification* clarifies or further explains the conflict and may help viewers to understand the possible consequences. *Conflict continues* is a scene that provides suspense and tension, engaging the interest of the audience before the climax. A preceding intense scene is generally followed by a *relief* scene, which presents a calmer setting and gives the audience a break from the intensity. *Theme* gives details about the theme of the story, and it may show social issues, values or the hero's attitude towards the situation. It can explain the reason why the hero fights for the goal; the motivation can be love, belief or desire for justice, to name a few. *Foreshadowing* displays fragments that foreshadow future events or gives information that is relevant later. The final function is called *ambiance*, which is an emotional scene that typically attaches the viewers to the story more deeply. (Porter et al. 2002: 11–12)



## 2.5 Character Arc in Narrative

Michael Z. Newman (2006) writes that television storytelling consists of three different sized units: *beats*, *episodes* and *arcs*. All these areas must be interesting and unified to keep the audience engaged week after week. *Beat* is the smallest unit in the narrative, known by the viewers as the scene. An hour-long serial has approximately twenty-five beats, of which the main plotline fills six or more, and the remaining ones consist of one or more sub plots. In addition to the action beats, an episode consists of several satellite beats that allow the audience to know the characters better and to understand their relationship with the other characters. It is important that the major cast members are present in a large number of beats and they appear on the screen frequently. This keeps the regular viewers connected with the main characters, while simultaneously making them known to the occasional viewers. (Newman 2006: 17–19)

An *episode* is built off individual beats, and it serves as a middle-sized unit in the television storytelling. Each one-hour episode consists of four smaller acts which typically end in a commercial break. The first act introduces the problem, the second and third act bring more complications and tackle the problem, and the fourth act brings forth the solution and the closure to the episodic plotlines, although serials tend to leave cliffhangers for the next episode. Several television series, including *Once Upon a Time*, have a theme for each episode, and use thematic storylines running parallelly and tackling similar topics. (Newman 2006: 20–22) *Once Upon a Time* does this by using flashbacks, which show events from the characters' pasts, and shows similar themes in their current lives in Storybrooke.

The last and largest storytelling unit Newman discusses is the *arc*. Each character's arc can be described as their personal plot. The arc consists of the character's experiences and development throughout the series, and can also be studied in smaller fragments, such as how the character arc progresses during one specific season. Serials that have a continuous plot get the chance to present vivid character arcs, where the character has the possibility to learn and grow along the narrative. Ultimately, the separate arcs from each character are tied together to create a coherent plotline. (Newman 2006: 23–25)

Greg M. Smith (2006: 83–84) notes that it can be challenging to maintain the balance between interesting episodes and longer character arcs. Each episode needs to contain new and interesting events, as well as provide a closure that satisfies the audience. Yet too excessive an amount of information cannot be revealed at the same time to keep the audience's interest and retain the plot's quality throughout the season. A character's arc cannot progress too rapidly and needs to have significance for the entire season. In addition to episodes that include a climactic event, there is a need for episodes where the character's arc does not move substantially forward. On the other hand, a plot that is too slow-paced will not keep the viewers engaged either. (Smith 2006: 83–84)

Newman (2006: 23) argues that in addition to the cliffhangers that are resolved in the following episode, there are also longer lasting questions related to character arcs that keep the suspense and make the audience come back for more. The viewers can, for example, be curious to know what will happen with Rumplestiltskin's and Belle's relationship, or whether Rumplestiltskin manages to find Baelfire, and therefore they keep on following the serial week after week, although the arc does not progress in every episode.

In addition to questions that span a longer period of time, episodes contain character-related questions that are answered in the same episode. These serve for narrative closure, but they do not affect the overall character arc. Smith (2006: 85) calls these *resolution without progress*. Even though they do not shape the arc substantially, they give the viewers an insight on the characters' traits and show how they act and react in different situations. (Smith 2006: 85) If Rumplestiltskin has a chance to help someone during an episode, but he chooses to do that only by striking a deal which gives him something in return, we do not see a change in his arc. However, we may deduce information about his personality and infer that he would probably act in the same way, should a similar situation emerge in a later episode.

Once a major plotline in an arc reaches its climax, a character arrives at an *irrevocable turning point*. These are the events that determine the direction for all the future actions by the character. (Smith 2006: 85) Turning points are typically shown in significant kernel

scenes. Rumplestiltskin's decision whether to fight in the ogre war or to cripple himself and go back home to his family shapes everything that occurs in his arc after that. Therefore, Smith describes the character arc as "a line of character action from irrevocable turning point to irrevocable turning point, extending through the serial narrative" (2006: 85).

Some actions of a character do not develop their arc significantly. This type of events can be called *actions without progress*. As the serial narrative spans over one or more seasons, actions without progress can be used to fill time between the more significant events. However, their function is not to be mere fillers. They are usually scenes where the viewers get to morally evaluate the characters and their motives. Even though a character does not commit meaningful acts, the viewers still see that the character is active and trying to impact their circumstances. (Smith 2006: 86–87) We can see scenes where Rumplestiltskin is looking for ways to be reunited with his son, but he is constantly failing with his mission. These scenes do not change his arc nor give an answer to the question whether or not he will find Baelfire, but they go on to show that he is actively trying and may thus give a more sympathetic image of him.

## 2.6 Character Development

Successive serials can span over a decade with numerous seasons and the same lead characters. Naturally, this means that the characters experience several significant life events and feelings ranging from love to heart break, from happiness to anger and sorrow. The viewers following the program spend a great amount of time with the characters, and hence they might feel like they know them, their personality traits and behavior patterns. They may share strong emotions with them, and even mourn when a beloved character dies.

E. M. Forster published his well-known theory of the distinction between flat and round characters in 1927. According to Forster (2002: 48), flat characters have one distinctive quality that defines them and by which they are typically remembered. However, that

does not mean the character could not be interesting, for that single quality can be a powerful one as well (Chatman 1978: 132). If a flat character begins to change, possess new qualities or surprise with their behavior, it means the character ceases to be flat and becomes round instead (Forster 2002: 48).

Round characters, on the contrary, have many qualities and they are capable of changing. Furthermore, round characters have the capability to surprise with their behavior. (Forster 2002: 55) Chatman (1978: 132) uses the term “open-ended” and suggests that open-ended characters constantly leave us guessing their next move. They are open constructs who can acquire new traits or leave old traits behind along their development. Compared to flat characters, round characters feel more closely like real people and it is easy to believe that their life continues even after the narrative comes to an end. (Chatman 1978: 132–134)

Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle (2004: 62) go on to suggest that realistic characters feel “life-like” if they fulfill three requirements. Firstly, their name and actions should be believable and convincing enough even for the real world. Secondly, the character needs to be round, meaning they should have different traits that make them complex and unpredictable. Some of the traits can contradict each other or change along the plot. The third requirement is that the character should still have a unique identity, in spite of the contradictory elements. (Bennett & Royle 2004: 62)

The readers and viewers interpret fictional characters largely by their traits. A trait is what makes a character unique, and it is also the element by which a character is commonly remembered. (Chatman 1978: 119, 123) J. P. Guilford (quoted in Chatman 1978: 121) defines a trait as “any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another”. Compared to a habit, a trait is a more general term that describes the character’s personality and is not limited to their actions. However, a trait can be inferred by their habits. (Chatman 1978: 121–122) If, for example, Rumplestiltskin constantly tricks people by using magic, one could interpret him as *cunning* or *deceitful*. Additionally, it is important to distinguish that a trait is not a feeling the character feels

at a singular moment, but a more stable attribute to the character's current state (Chatman 1978: 126).

Character traits need not be static throughout the entire story. As the narrative evolves, the character experiences significant life events, which change him or her as a person. Thus, the traits can also change and exist only in a part of the narrative. Even if a character possesses a certain trait, it does not exclude the possibility that they can behave in a contradictory way or have conflicting traits. (Chatman 1978: 122, 126)

Radha O'Meara (2015: 190) writes that there are three ways how an action can imply character change in a serial narrative. The first way is going through meaningful life events, which could be a birth of a child, death of a loved one, marriage, divorce, moving to a new place, or starting a new job. In the case of Rumpelstiltskin, his wife leaving him, his son's death, and his wedding, for example, would be events that affect his life significantly and shape his character arc. Secondly, O'Meara lists intense emotions, which could include Mr. Gold's desperation once Belle loses memory of their life together, or his hatred towards Zelena, which drives him to stab her. Thirdly, a character can act in an odd way or show traits that are not typical for his or her behavior. With Rumpelstiltskin, this is seen in the scenes where he chooses goodness over his powers and lets someone go without punishment after a wrongdoing towards him. (O'Meara 2015: 190)

### 3 LUST FOR POWER OR LONGING FOR LOVE?

In this chapter, I analyze the kernel scenes in seasons 1–3 where Rumplestiltskin makes a decision between good and evil. I study whether there is a clear change in his character traits and how it appears in the narrative. I have divided the scenes into three subchapters based on where he is living at the time, because in each abode, his life situation differs significantly. The first subchapter presents the events that take place in the Enchanted Forest when Rumplestiltskin is still living in a small hut in the village together with Baelfire and has more traces of humanity. The second subchapter focuses on the time when he is primarily seen as a villain and he lives in a castle. The third subchapter consists of the scenes that take place in Storybrooke. Lastly, I summarize the findings in chapter 3.4. As the series contains a large number of flashbacks, all the events in the episodes do not occur in a chronological order. However, I present the scenes in my material chronologically for a clearer story arc and for a perceivable development of traits. I use the name Rumplestiltskin, or the shorter version Rumple, when discussing the events that occur in the Enchanted Forest before the curse, and the name Gold when discussing the time during and after the curse in Storybrooke, when he has adopted his new identity.

#### 3.1 Rumplestiltskin

Rumplestiltskin comes from poor origins. His mother abandons him as a baby, and he is raised by his father, who is a village coward and a drunkard. After his father leaves him as well, he is raised by two spinsters and known by everyone as the son of a coward, only to be stigmatized as the village coward as well in the older age. He enjoys a calmful, static life and wishes to live his life as unnoticed as possible. In the beginning of his arc, he could be categorized as a flat character with cowardice as his single and most visible character trait (Forster 2002: 48).

Episode #2.14 shows the initial storyline that sets forward the change of Rumplestiltskin's life as the village coward. He is called to the front to fight in the war against the ogres who are tormenting the kingdom, and he is excited and hopeful that by fighting honorably

and bravely, he can prove that he is not the coward that everyone thinks him to be. Once he has cleared his name, he can return home and they can start a family with his wife, Milah, which is something they have been dreaming of together.

However, on the day before the battle, Rumple meets a seer who tells him that Milah is already pregnant. The seer foretells: “Your wife will bear you a son, but your actions on the battlefield tomorrow will leave him fatherless” (*Once Upon a Time* #2.14). Given that Rumple himself had to grow fatherless, he does not wish the same destiny upon his own son. Moreover, as he is not a brave man, the thought of dying the following day frightens him to a great extent; presumably, not many soldiers would enjoy entering a battle where they have been predicted to die, either. The first scene of my material presents an important *crisis* scene, where Rumplestiltskin has no other adversary but himself (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Hearing that the only way out of the war alive is injury, he resorts to a desperate act: smashing his own leg with a hammer.

Rumple chooses life and family, as he is willing to do anything to be alive to raise his son. However, the society around him is fast to judge him as the rumors spread that the wound is self-inflicted, and Rumple’s injury is stigmatized as an act of cowardice. Milah’s stance to the matter is similar, when Rumple arrives at home walking with a cane. Milah has given birth to a boy, but she is upset with her husband:

Rumplestiltskin: I left the front to be with you. You and Baelfire.  
 Milah: You left because you were afraid. You became what everyone thought you were: a coward. Just like your father.  
 Rumplestiltskin: I am nothing like my father. He tried to abandon me. I will never ever do that to my son. That’s why I did this. For him. All for the boy. To save him from the same fate I suffered. Growing up without a father.  
 Milah: You sentenced him to a fate much worse: growing up as your son.  
 Rumplestiltskin: What else could I do?  
 Milah: You could’ve fought, Rumple. You could’ve died.  
 (*Once Upon a Time* #2.14)

The scene begins the fall of their marriage. In spite of this, Rumplestiltskin seems content with the decision that he made, as he gets to hold his son in his arms for the first time and

promises never to leave him. Milah values reputation over her husband's life, whereas Rumple is willing to go to extreme measures for his family. Although his initial plan was to prove the other villagers that he is not a coward, he ends up showing signs of cowardice by escaping the battle. However, his driving force is the love for his family and desire to be a good father and part of his son's life. His intentions are pure, as he is willing to walk for the rest of his life with a limp to be able to offer a better life for his son. At this point of time, he settles for a modest life in the village and does little to defend himself against the people who mock him. He is, admittedly, a coward, but he is also extremely family-oriented and caring, which are qualities not usually associated with soldiers on the battlefield. As the society does not support his life choices, he can be seen as a villain born out of mistreatment and poor conditions.

The next three scenes I discuss are from episode #1.8, where Rumplestiltskin gets his first taste of power. As Baelfire grows, Rumple and Milah's relationship grows more distant. Ultimately, Milah falls in love with Captain Hook and runs away with him, leaving her family to think that the pirates abducted her. Ever since that, Rumple leads a simple life alone with Baelfire. He has no other family, nor friends, and he says that without his son—the only thing that matters to him in this life—he might as well turn into dust. The plotline begins by Rumplestiltskin hearing that all the children in the kingdom are enlisted to fight in the ogre war at the age of fourteen. As a result, Rumple decides to run away with Baelfire two days before Baelfire's 14th birthday. Since Rumple has never in his life fought for anything, running away seems to be his only solution to problems. Unluckily, the king's men find them on the road, and the duke makes Rumple kiss his boot. Rumple wishes to serve as a role model of a man to his son and feels appalled of being humiliated in front of him.

A beggar whom they meet on the road tells Rumple about the existence of a magical dagger, which contains great powers and which the duke stores in his castle. He explains that Rumple can either control the power and the Dark One, or alternatively, take the power and become the Dark One himself. In the scene that functions as *confrontation*, Rumplestiltskin confronts and overcomes his first obstacle (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Rumple sets the duke's castle on fire and steals the dagger. Knowing that losing his son



is at stake, Rumple finds the courage to fight for his cause. Instead of merely breaking in to steal the dagger, he causes more havoc by destroying the entire castle, possibly as a revenge for the duke. Although the purpose is to protect Baelfire's safety, he brings Baelfire with him to complete the dangerous mission. He can see this as a chance to be manly and redeem his reputation in his son's eyes after the earlier humiliation. This is the first time that Rumplestiltskin overcomes his cowardice and is clearly already drawn by the notion of power. However, he firmly believes that once he has power, he will use it only for good purposes to protect the local children. He justifies the destruction by thinking that he does it to save Baelfire. Baelfire, on the contrary, does not object to being called to the front and tries to tell his father that he is willing to fight. Thus, the motivation behind Rumple's decision is not solely protecting his son, but also escaping his own loneliness.

Rumplestiltskin's subsequent challenge is presented in the *crisis* scene (Porter et al. 2002: 10). In it, he summons the Dark One, Zoso. Zoso provokes him to the point where frightened Rumple becomes furious and stabs him with the dagger. Rumple recognizes the dying man as the beggar who laughs at him and realizes that he has been tricked all along:

Zoso: Looks like you made a deal you didn't understand. I don't think you're gonna do that again.  
 Rumplestiltskin: You told me to kill you.  
 Zoso: My life was such a burden. You'll see. Magic always comes with a price, and now it's yours to pay.  
 Rumplestiltskin: Why me? Why me?  
 Zoso: I know how to recognize a desperate soul.  
 (*Once Upon a Time* #1.8)

Rumple watches horrified as his skin begins to darken, and the name "Rumplestiltskin" appears on the blade of the dagger.

Instead of controlling the immortal being to do his bidding, Rumplestiltskin consumes the dark powers and becomes the next Dark One. After feeling helpless for his entire life, the power gives him a chance to stand up for himself. Nevertheless, he is frightened of

the change that he feels inside him as soon as the blade hits its target. He realizes that power is not only a blessing, and he begs the dying man to tell him what to do. By killing a man, he darkens his soul, but he acts out of desperation and clearly has no clue of the burden that he undertakes.

*Resolution* to the storyline reveals the outcome of the crisis in the final scene (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Rumplestiltskin arrives at home when the king's men are retrieving Baelfire for the royal army. After insulting the duke, it only takes a brief moment for Rumple to slaughter all the men in front of his son. Although he thinks that he saves his son, Baelfire is scared of the sudden change that he sees in his father. Rumplestiltskin, on the contrary, is thrilled as he gets the first taste of power, and his grin tells that he intends never to let go of it.

The scene presents an irrevocable turning point in Rumplestiltskin's story arc: there is no going back to the scared, inconspicuous man that he used to be (Smith 2006: 85). After being called a coward for his entire life, he enjoys finally being able to defend himself and to avenge those who made fun of him earlier. Even though the duke is his main target, he feels the desire to kill all the men. As he previously did not wish to hurt anyone and was too afraid to stand up for himself, killing six men in the first few hours as the Dark One shows that he has not overcome his unprocessed trauma and he holds a grudge against all the people who used to oppress him. He promised to only use the power with good intentions, but the aspiration for vengeance takes over immediately.

As the Dark One, Rumplestiltskin becomes immortal and consumed with dark magic. After he has grown addicted to his power, he cannot imagine a life without magic, and losing it would mean vulnerability. He becomes conflicted about his priorities between power and family, which can be seen in his actions throughout the series. According to Forster's (2002: 55) definition, Rumplestiltskin can be categorized as a round character, as he acquires several, even contradictory, character traits and his behavior is not always predictable.

Rumplestiltskin's change has a significant effect on his son's life. Baelfire has no friends because everyone is afraid of his father, and he watches helplessly as Rumple kills anyone whom he sees to pose even the slightest threat to him or his son. Rumple does not let Baelfire play outside because the world is a dangerous place, especially since he has gathered a great number of enemies who could avenge him by hurting his son.

Rumplestiltskin faces the next challenge when Baelfire goes missing. He hears from the other villagers that a mystical pied piper lures the boys of the village with the tune of his pipe. He follows the sound and finds a group of masked boys dancing joyfully around fire, but he fails to recognize Baelfire amongst them. Unexpectedly, he discovers that the pied piper is, in fact, his father, Peter Pan. Pan says that he is lonely, and thus he is looking for lost boys to join him in Neverland. He offers Rumple a deal: Rumple can ask Baelfire whether he wishes to stay at home or go to Neverland. If Baelfire chooses his father, Pan promises to leave and shall never return to their village.

This leads to the scene that functions as both *crisis* and *resolution* to the episode's plot (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Rumplestiltskin sees that Baelfire looks happy rejoicing with the other boys and feels uncertain about the situation. Instead of asking for Baelfire's opinion on the matter whether he would like to stay or to go, Rumplestiltskin uses magic to take his son back home. He knows that Baelfire is unhappy, and hence, he is afraid that Baelfire would choose the opportunity for a better life in a new land. Therefore, he does not ask for Baelfire to come home, but takes him abruptly with him. Baelfire says that he knew about Pan's deal, which was a ploy to see whether his father trusts him. If asked, he would have chosen to come home. Instead, Rumple shows that he does not trust his son's judgement but uses magic to control him as he pleases. He is so afraid that everyone abandons him that he is not even willing to take the risk. Once again, he acts for selfish reasons and chooses power to escape his own loneliness.

The narrative shows how lonely Baelfire continues living in misery. He begs his father to let go of the power, as that has changed him into a completely different person. Rumple tells that the only way to get rid of his powers is by killing him with the dagger. Eventually, he agrees to make a deal with Baelfire: should there be a way to discard the

powers without Rumple dying, he will do it. He believes that Baelfire cannot find another solution because he does not think that one exists, and therefore he feels calm about the deal, although deep down, he has no intention to go back to his previous life. Unexpectedly, Baelfire receives a magic bean that opens a portal through which they can travel to a land without magic, where the Dark One's powers would not reach. Rumplestiltskin never breaks his deals, and therefore reluctantly agrees to keep the promise that he made to the most important person in his life.

In the following *crisis* scene, the crisis is inside Rumplestiltskin's mind (Porter et al. 2002: 10). He is conflicted between the deal that he made with his son and the overwhelming feeling that his powers give to him. Baelfire opens the portal and tries to pull his father with him, but Rumple holds on to the ground with his dagger to prevent him from falling. In the end, he lets go of Baelfire's hand and watches helplessly how his son falls through the portal alone. He regrets the decision as soon as he lets go, but the portal closes and Baelfire disappears with it.

Although Rumplestiltskin was ready to walk with a limp for the rest of his life so that his son would not need to grow fatherless, he ends up losing Baelfire. He has never forgiven his own father who abandoned him as a child in exchange for eternal youth; nevertheless, he makes the same mistake and chooses power over his family. The magic is his addiction, which prevents him from thinking clearly. The scene shows Rumplestiltskin's conflict as a symbolic decision that he needs to make between family and power. While he holds Baelfire's hand in one hand, he hangs on to the magical dagger with the other hand, and he needs to choose which grip to loosen. Ultimately, he chooses the dagger over his own son.

The scene presents an irrevocable turning point in Rumplestiltskin's character arc (Smith 2006: 85). Not a day goes by that he does not regret his decision. After he loses the only person who still loves him, he ends up all alone. After the event, he dedicates countless years of his life looking for a way to be reunited with Baelfire. He uses a great deal of questionable ways in his quest, but he thinks that the cause of finding his son justifies all his bad deeds. With the loneliness and no one to live for, his soul darkens more and more.

### 3.2 The Beast

In this subchapter, I discuss the events that takes place in the Enchanted Forest after Rumplestiltskin abandons the old hut where they used to dwell and moves into a big castle on his own. Nevertheless, he feels equally unhappy there. While Rumple seems to think that the entire world is unjust, his desire for vengeance grows steadily. He wishes to avenge all the past wrongdoings towards him, and Captain Hook, whom he thinks to have stolen his wife, is his main enemy. When Rumple sees that Hook has returned to the town, he goes to question him about Milah. Hook tells him that Milah has died a long time ago, and Rumple challenges him to a duel. Nonetheless, Milah appears to interrupt the sword fight, and tells Rumple that she was not abducted; instead, she fell in love and chose to leave her family, even her son, behind for an adventurous and exciting life.

The plot continues with a scene that functions as *crisis* (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Rumplestiltskin makes a deal with Milah: he promises to spare their lives in exchange for a magic bean, which allows him to travel between realms. He does not tell her that he needs the bean to find their son who is lost. He blames Milah for being a bad mother and demands to know why she left. When Milah says that she never loved him even during their marriage, Rumple grows furious and breaks their deal by ripping her heart out. Milah dies in Hook's arms, with her last words professing her love to the pirate. Despite the importance of family in his life, an emotional rush drives Rumplestiltskin to kill the mother of his child and he shows that he does not let anyone to disparage him anymore. He cuts off Hook's hand but says that he wants Hook to stay alive and suffer like he did when Milah left.

Rumple blames Milah for abandoning their son without telling her that he, in fact, did the same thing and left Baelfire to grow alone. The difference is that Milah did it to escape her miserable life, for love and happiness, whereas Rumple abandoned their son to retain his power. He does not let anyone get away with wrongdoing towards him, and that includes the woman he used to love, whom he coldheartedly murders. Cowardice can still be defined as one of his main character traits, as he is still afraid of facing problems. In

the past, his solution was to escape; now, he destroys the problems instead of handling them or dealing with his emotions.

For a long time, Rumplestiltskin was brokenhearted after he thought Milah had died. Hearing the truth that Milah had lied to him and deceived him with another man does not help to build his trust towards people. He hides behind the tough and scaly skin, considering himself ugly and refusing to believe anyone could truly care about him. Rumple finds it easier to be feared than loved, and he spreads fear everywhere in the kingdom. Even though nearly everyone sees him as a villain, his reputation precedes him, and desperate people approach him for deals. Their problems are solved with the help of Rumplestiltskin, but the deals come with a terrible cost. At this point of his arc, manipulation and vindictiveness are his most distinctive traits.

As Belle becomes a highly influential person in Rumplestiltskin's life, she has a significant impact on the development of his character arc. In order to save her kingdom from the ogres, Belle makes a deal to live as a caretaker in Rumplestiltskin's castle for the rest of her life, if he helps her village to win the battle. However, the need for a caretaker is not the only reason why Rumple requests Belle to move in the castle; another reason is loneliness. Rumple meets Belle at the time when he has already become dark and most characters consider him an inhuman monster. Similarly as in the tale *Beauty and the Beast*, Belle is the first one who manages to see the man behind the beast.

The plotline that leads to the next scene in my material begins when Robin Hood breaks into Rumplestiltskin's castle in an attempt to steal a magic wand. Rumple captures him in a dungeon, but compassionate Belle releases the prisoner who takes the wand with him as he leaves. Rumple demands a punishment to show other thieves that no one is allowed to steal from him. Therefore, he takes Belle with him as he goes to Sherwood forest to locate and kill Robin Hood. In the following *crisis* scene, they find Robin Hood and the enemies are in conflict (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Rumple and Belle witness from a hill that Robin uses the magic wand to heal his pregnant wife from a fatal illness. Despite Belle's desperate pleas, Rumple aims at Robin with a magical arrow that never misses its target. However, he becomes hesitant when Belle says, "You are not the kind of man to leave a

child fatherless” (*Once Upon a Time* #2.19). As a consequence, Rumple shoots the arrow next to Robin’s head and lets his target escape.

As the Dark One, Rumplestiltskin has not done anything selfless in a long time. However, Belle’s words stop him and bring another feeling that surpasses the vindictiveness: regret. He regrets abandoning Baelfire deeply, and hence feels sympathy for the unborn child, whom he does not sentence to grow as an orphan. Furthermore, for the first time, he shows Belle that he still has traces of goodness and decency in him. Belle hugs him, and Rumple looks confused but smiles shyly by himself. According to O’Meara’s (2015: 190) definition, Rumple shows character change by acting in a way that is not typical for him, as he has not let anyone evade punishment after wrongdoing towards him ever since he became the Dark One.

Belle makes Rumplestiltskin’s humane side come out more strongly than anything after losing Baelfire. Slowly, Rumple begins to show more friendliness towards her, which leads to them growing closer to each other and eventually falling in love. Although she brings out the goodness in him, he finds it difficult to trust that her feelings are genuine. Yet he becomes more confident and shows vulnerability by telling Belle bits about his personal life. For the first time in a long time, Rumple has someone whom he cares about again. On one hand, it gives him a reason to live. On the other hand, it gives his enemies an effective factor to use against him.

The next three scenes, from episode #1.12, show the storyline of Rumplestiltskin’s and Belle’s love story, and the parties struggling are Rumple and Belle with their feelings towards each other. The first scene functions as *confrontation*, as Rumple confronts the obstacle of trust (Porter et al. 2002: 10). He tells Belle that he was once a man and he has lost his son, which shows humanity and vulnerability. Belle’s former fiancé Gaston arrives at Rumple’s castle to fight for Belle, but with a single snap of his fingers, Rumple turns Gaston into a rose that he gives to Belle. After losing his wife to a pirate, he has no intention to let rivalry get in his way anymore, and he wins the heart of the woman easily. Yet, he is dishonest by not telling Belle about Gaston’s visit. As a sign of trust, Rumple sends Belle to town to fetch straw for him to spin. Belle is astonished and asks whether

Rumple believes that she will come back, but Rumple states that he expects never to see her again.

The aforementioned scene is important because by sending Belle on a trip outside the castle, Rumplestiltskin can test whether she wishes to return and whether her feelings towards him are pure. After keeping Belle imprisoned in the castle for several months, Rumple's decision to let Belle go is selfless. If Belle chooses not to come back, she has regained her freedom and she can continue with her life. On the other hand, if she returns, she comes voluntarily, which means she wishes to stay with Rumplestiltskin. In the past, Rumple used magic to keep his loved ones with him and evade loneliness, but he offers Belle the freedom of choice.

Belle has already decided to return home to her family, when she meets the Evil Queen who tells her that any curse can be broken by a true love's kiss. Belle is excited and hopeful that she can free Rumplestiltskin from the curse of being the Dark One, and hence, he can become a human being again and they can share a life together. The *crisis* scene of the storyline shows that the parties in conflict are Rumplestiltskin and Belle, who have fallen in love with each other (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Belle returns to the castle and Rumple is surprised but delighted to see her. This leads to the moment when they kiss each other for the first time. At first Rumple looks happy, but slowly, he begins to feel transformation inside him. His skin color whitens as the darkness begins to leave from his body. This frightens Rumple, as he assumes that Belle is trying to steal his powers.

Rumplestiltskin: I knew this was a trick. I knew you could never care for me. Oh yeah, you're working for her? Or is this all you? Is this you being the hero and killing the beast?

Belle: It was working...

Rumplestiltskin: Shut up!

Belle: This means it's true love!

Rumplestiltskin: Shut the hell up!

Belle: Why won't you believe me?

Rumplestiltskin: Because no one, no one could ever, ever love me!

(*Once Upon a Time* #1.12)



Belle chooses love and thinks that she is able to help Rumple to become a human being again. She assumes that Rumple considers the power a burden, while he cannot imagine a life without it. Therefore, she returns back to the man whom she loves, as she thinks that she is the only one who can save him with true love. Rumplestiltskin, on the contrary, can interpret the kiss merely as a trick to steal his powers, and he rejects Belle because he sees love as weakness. Rumple feels betrayed and thinks that the whole world has turned against him, because he has not encountered kindness in his life in a long time. Once again, he chooses power over a person he loves, as he did with his son.

The last scene of the storyline serves as the *resolution* (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Rumple has locked Belle in a dungeon, and he tells her that he will release her from her task as the caretaker of the castle. His body language is uneasy and he avoids eye contact, which shows that he is not comfortable with his decision. Belle leaves reluctantly, but returns to face Rumplestiltskin one more time:

Belle:                You were freeing yourself. You could have had happiness if you just believed that someone could want you. But you couldn't take the chance.  
 Rumplestiltskin: That's a lie.  
 Belle:                You're a coward, Rumplestiltskin. And no matter how thick you make your skin, that doesn't change.  
 Rumplestiltskin: I'm not a coward, dearie. It's quite simple, really. My power means more to me than you.  
 Belle:                No. No, it doesn't. You just don't think I can love you. Now you've made your choice. And you're going to regret it. Forever.  
 (*Once Upon a Time* #1.12)

Although Rumple has not shown mercy to most people, he has no intention to hurt Belle. Instead, he chooses once again to run away; this time to run from his feelings. Although Rumplestiltskin acts for the benefit of Belle by releasing her from life-long imprisonment, he acts out of self-interest. He feels deeply in love but can only see love as a threat and weakness. Therefore, although his decision is by no means evil and he offers Belle her freedom, he leaves both of them heartbroken. Rumple's loneliness and misery only grows, as he has lost both his son and the woman he loves. As a closure to the plotline,

Regina imprisons Belle and lies to Rumple that she has died, and Rumple is left to mourn in his solitude, filled with desperation and regret.

Chronologically the last scene in my material from the Enchanted Forest functions as *resolution* (Porter et al. 2002: 10). It occurs right before the curse takes the fairy tale characters to Storybrooke. Regina's attempts to cast the curse are unsuccessful and she is forced to go to ask help from Rumplestiltskin, who is at that time locked up in a cage. Rumple, who never helps anyone without a deal, agrees only if he gets something in return. He makes Regina promise that he will have a good life in the new land where the curse takes them, and that should he ever ask for anything, Regina is required to fulfill his every request, as long as Rumple says "please".

The episode explains Regina's storyline and Rumplestiltskin functions as a donor who gives her vital information to complete her mission (Propp 1928: 24). For the episode's plot line, the scene functions as *complication*; however, for Rumplestiltskin, this can be categorized as *resolution*, because he gets precisely everything he wants. Although the scene is part of Regina's arc, I included the scene in my analysis because it shows that Rumplestiltskin truly is at the background of the majority of events happening at the beginning of the series. Rumple needs someone to create the curse for him in order to get to a land without magic where Baelfire is, and thus he manipulates Regina to think that she is the one who needs the curse. Even when going to a new land, Rumple wishes to be the most powerful resident of all, and even though Regina is the mayor of Storybrooke, Mr. Gold practically owns the whole town. His lust for power has reached its limit and he is, without question, the most powerful character in Storybrooke, as he has even Regina in his control to fulfill any request he ever asks for. Rumplestiltskin's decision to help Regina with the curse enables him to choose both power and family; yet, for his son, he is willing to make a personal sacrifice and lose the thing he has held dear: magic.

### 3.3 Mr. Gold

In this subchapter, I analyze scenes that take place in Storybrooke and focus on the character of Mr. Gold. Mr. Gold is a mysterious pawnbroker and antiques dealer, who lives peacefully and alone in Storybrooke. He does not appear to have any family, friends or even allies, but, as no one dares to step in his way, no visible enemies either. He collects rent from properties around town, and if he does not receive the payment on time, he uses questionable ways to show that he does not allow for being deceived. Therefore, all the other residents are afraid of him and avoid doing business with him unless it is deemed necessary. As Gold himself tells Emma when she arrives in town, “Everyone’s afraid of Regina, but they’re more afraid of me” (Mr. Gold, *Once Upon a Time* #1.8). This shows that he has managed to retain the powerful image of him once he has acquired the new identity. He, as Rumplestiltskin, prefers being feared rather than loved and uses the fear to control things. He does not share private information and leaves other characters puzzled about his persona. Similarly, as Henry learns about the curse and begins to guess the Storybrooke residents’ fairy tale identities, Gold’s past identity remains a mystery to him.

After Emma arrives in town, Gold learns to remember his previous identity. He uses this against Regina by saying the word “please” whenever he wishes her to act in a certain way. As the first season progresses, Gold begins to show various, even contradicting traits, which are in line with Rumplestiltskin’s traits. Although he acquires a new persona, he does not change significantly when taken to Storybrooke; instead, he waits patiently for the curse to be broken, so he can leave town and find Baelfire.

As soon as the curse is broken, Gold begins to act for his own advantage. He finds Belle, whom he thought to be dead, and hears that Regina has been keeping her imprisoned for all these years. He insists revenge against Regina and hopes to finally find his son, but to complete both of the missions, he needs what is lacking from Storybrooke: magic. The next scene in my material functions as *resolution* both in the episode and for a longer-lasting arc that comes to a conclusion in the season finale (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Gold takes Belle to an abandoned well in the middle of the woods and tells her that the streams

under the well have magical properties. He throws a potion into the well and purple smoke begins to rise and spread over the town. Belle, who has been imprisoned for 28 years and is still new to this land, wonders what is happening:

Mr. Gold: We're in a land without magic, and I'm bringing it. Magic is coming.

Belle: Why?

Mr. Gold: Why? Because magic is power.

*(Once Upon a Time #1.22)*

Gold has been patiently waiting for the moment when the mundane rules can be broken again, and it is possible to make magic work. He tries to justify that finding Baelfire is the reason why he needs magic, but he still finds it difficult to trust people and therefore, he does not tell even Belle what the reasons behind his actions are. Nevertheless, Gold has been missing the feeling of superiority that magic gives to him. With the dark magic, he transforms back into the immortal Dark One. There are only few people in Storybrooke who know how to use magic. By bringing magic to Storybrooke, he gives an advantage also to his enemy, Regina, but he knows that he is more powerful than her.

Gold's selfish decision to revive his magical powers jeopardizes the safety of the entire town, as in the subsequent seasons, evil entities from other realms find their ways to Storybrooke to terrorize the formerly isolated and peaceful community. Nonetheless, with the help of magic Gold eventually finds a way to be reunited with Baelfire, which could otherwise have been an impossible task. However, he knows that finding Baelfire is not the sole reason why he brought magic to Storybrooke. He needs magic for himself, and he does not care about the consequences that it brings to the people around him.

The storyline continues with manipulation and vengeance. Gold is happy that Belle is alive and back in his life, but he is furious at Regina who lied to him about Belle's death for the entire time, while she kept Belle locked in an asylum in Storybrooke. Belle, on the contrary, does not support revenge and pleads Gold not to kill Regina, and thus Gold makes a promise that he will not kill her. In spite of the promise, Gold has no intention to let Regina go without revenge after she has caused him a great amount of pain for several decades. Therefore, he sends a vengeful spirit, a wraith, after her. All the residents have

turned against Regina after they got back their memories and realized that she was the one who cursed them, and hence Gold sees his action as justified and helpful for everyone. However, the residents are equally enraged with Gold, for they do not trust that his decision to bring magic to this world was innocent.

The following scene functions as *complication* (Porter et al. 2002: 10). In it, Belle overhears Gold telling others that he has sent a wraith to get rid of their problem with Regina. She is upset that she cannot trust the person to whom she turned for security and protection after she was released from the asylum.

Belle: You lied to me.

Mr. Gold: No, I kept my word. I will not kill her.

Belle: You toy with words like you do people. You're still a man who makes wrong choices. I thought you'd changed.

Mr. Gold: What, in the hour you've known me?

(*Once Upon a Time* #2.1)

Belle is back after 28 years, but she is immediately disappointed with Gold. Their relationship does not get a trustful beginning, as Gold prioritizes revenge over the promise that he made to Belle. As he has faced a great amount of injustice during his life, the grudge inside him has grown steadily, and he continues with the same line of vengeance in Storybrooke as he did in the Enchanted Forest. That he reacted furiously to even small mistreatment towards him made Baelfire wish to get away from him, and he continues similar behavior with the people that he loves. He continues to prioritize pride and reputation over listening to his loved ones' warnings.

The relationship between Gold and Belle does not continue trustfully, as Gold keeps on hiding things from Belle. Eventually, Belle tells him that since he is too cowardly to be honest with her, she never wants to see him again. The *resolution* to the storyline comes in the last scene (Porter et al. 2002: 10). The scene shows that Gold finally finds the courage to be honest with Belle and open up about his real feelings. He tells about losing Baelfire due to his lust for power and, for the first time, he admits the addiction by stating that "Magic has become a crutch that I can't walk without" (Mr. Gold, *Once Upon a Time* #2.4). Gold has been afraid to admit the truth to even himself, for saying things aloud

makes them more real. Still, Belle appreciates the gesture and their relationship deepens anew.

The scene is important because, for the first time since becoming the Dark One, Gold shows character development by confessing his real feelings, which shows vulnerability and the ability to admit his weakness. He shows that he trusts Belle not to use his weakness against him, and she gladly accepts his imperfection because it shows humanity. This is a turning point in Gold's character arc and in their love story. Gold chooses to fix the problems in their relationship by talking, instead of running or destroying things. From this scene onwards, as long as they remember each other, they are inseparable.

After the curse is broken, outsiders can find their way to remote Storybrooke, and magic allows also fairy tale characters from other realms to make their way into the land. Among them, Gold's main enemy Captain Hook sails his ship to Storybrooke. He wishes to avenge Gold through Belle, as Rumpelstiltskin also killed Milah, a woman he loved. Although he does not hurt Belle, Gold is furious at him. The scene that I discuss functions as *confrontation* (Porter et al. 2002: 10). In the scene, the old enemies, Gold and Hook, confront each other for the first time after the curse. Gold goes to Hook's ship full of rage towards the pirate. He limps and walks with his cane, and Hook mocks him by saying that Gold looks like the coward whom he met a long time ago. With magic, Gold could destroy Hook instantly, but he wishes to show that in this world, even without magic he is a brave man. Therefore, he begins to beat Hook over and over again with his walking cane. Belle begs for him to stop, but Hook continues provoking and says that Gold cannot stop, as he has to prove that he is not a coward anymore.

Once again, Gold prioritizes his tough reputation and cannot let anyone get away without punishment. However, Hook is equally vengeful towards him, and therefore Gold's behavior can be partially interpreted as self-defense. Yet Gold feels the need to prove that his new personality is not dependent on his dark magic, but he is able to stand up for himself also without magic. Even when his loved ones ask for him to be merciful, he needs to keep people frightened of him, and the pattern is repeated time after time. Gold

has the upper hand in this scene and leaves the beaten and bloody Hook lie on the ship. He insists that Hook needs to die, but in the end, decides to spare his life to show Belle that he has goodness in him. In the succeeding *crisis* scene, Hook gets his revenge by making Belle to lose her memory, and Gold regrets showing mercy and letting him live.

The following scene shows Mr. Gold's ultimate sacrifice. The plotline leading to it begins when the group goes to Neverland to save Henry. Gold enters the island with the determination that this is his final destination. In the past, he received a prophecy that a little boy will be his undoing, and he knows this boy is his grandson, Henry. Therefore, he is willing to die for Henry to redeem the mistakes that he made with Baelfire. Nevertheless, he does not need to resort to fatal actions, as the entire group manages to return to Storybrooke intact. Unfortunately, so does Peter Pan, who begins terrorizing the town immediately in an attempt to shape Storybrooke into a new Neverland under his reign.

In the meaningful *crisis* scene, the opposing forces face each other in the final conflict (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Gold confronts his father on the main street of Storybrooke, surrounded by his family. Knowing that the only way to kill Peter Pan is to kill himself at the same time, Gold bids his farewells to Baelfire and Belle, after which he stabs the Dark One's dagger through his father's back to his own chest. He embraces Pan in a deadly hug, and utters his last words: "Oh, but I'm a villain. And villains don't get happy endings" (Mr. Gold, *Once Upon a Time* #3.11). The dagger, the only thing that can kill the otherwise immortal beings, twists through their hearts and Gold and Pan vanish into the air.

Gold lets the prophecy be fulfilled. In the past, he ran away from war, because he wanted to live for his son. Now, he is willing to die for his son. He has had the chance to apologize to Baelfire for his past mistakes, and therefore, he can die with a peaceful mind. He gives Baelfire a chance to be a good father to Henry, while he can avenge his own father for all his evil deeds. This shows that once Gold has people whom he loves in his life, they help to bring out his good side. Family has become a priority again, although he lost a thought

of it for a long time, when the power blinded him. Even though he has been seen as a villain ever since he became the Dark One, he dies a hero.

Nonetheless, the aforementioned scene is not the end of Rumpelstiltskin's character arc. Baelfire finds a way to bring the Dark One back alive, but the ritual demands a life for life. He manages to surpass the problem for some time, but in the end, Baelfire dies due to Zelena's actions. Zelena possesses the Dark One's dagger and controls Mr. Gold with it. Therefore, scenes from these episodes are not a part of my analysis, as Gold is controlled and is not depicted as having any influence on his own actions.

Belle stays by Gold's side despite his flaws, for she also believes that her presence makes him a better man. At the end of the third season, Gold proposes to Belle, and their small and modest wedding takes place in the season finale. Given the episode's longer plotline, the following scene functions as *complication* (Porter et al. 2002: 10). It is a scene where Gold voices his proposal, and it shows a joyful and tender reunion between the two after Gold has been released from Zelena's captivity. After Zelena is captured and Gold reclaims his freedom, Belle finds Gold and offers to give him back the dagger:

Mr. Gold: Oh, Belle. What you're giving me is more than I can ever give you. But I will try. This? This is trust. It means you trust me. With all your heart.

Belle: I do.

Mr. Gold: And I shall trust you with mine. Take it. I am now and for all the future yours.

(*Once Upon a Time* #3.20)

Gold gives the dagger to Belle for safe keeping, but he fails to mention that he has swapped the daggers and the one he gives back to her, in fact, is a fake. Gold is full of hatred towards Zelena due to Baelfire's death, and therefore, when Belle asks him to promise not to go after Zelena, he does not directly make the promise. Instead, he proposes to her, and they embrace each other happily.

Gold talks about trust and, simultaneously, he lies and hands Belle the fake dagger. This shows that their relationship is not presented as having a trustful foundation, even though Belle strongly believes Gold has changed and become a better man. Nevertheless, Gold



has difficulties getting rid of his manipulative habits, for he enjoys having control over things. Once again, he is toying with words and shows untrustworthiness. Even at the same moment when Gold asks Belle to be his wife and makes a promise to spend the rest of his life with her, he manages to lie to her in two different ways: by lying about the dagger and about not avenging Zelena. The fact that he talks about trust at the same time reminds about his manipulative tendencies and can even be interpreted as narcissistic.

The last scene of my material finishes the same plotline and functions as *resolution* (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Zelena is defeated and imprisoned in the *crisis* scene, and Gold makes the situation more final with his action in the last scene. Despite Belle's request, Gold goes to meet Zelena, who is locked in a prison cell. He has the real dagger with him, and he admits to Zelena that he lied to Belle and gave her the fake dagger. Zelena has lost her magic, and thus, she is powerless and she begs for mercy. Nevertheless, Gold made a promise to Baelfire to avenge his death, and he stabs Zelena with the dagger.

He continues with the same kind of behavior that has been seen several times: ignoring Belle's wishes and seeking revenge. However, in Storybrooke, he has stopped hurting innocent people, and he only wishes to harm the other villains, who have caused harm to him and his family. Considering the injustice that he faced with Zelena, he can have sympathy from the audience despite his actions. He is in pain after losing his son—this time for good—and he refuses to let Zelena get away with that. Regardless of the fact that Belle has stayed by his side and forgiven everything evil that he has done during his life, Gold still feels the need to lie to Belle and hide his evil deeds from her.

### 3.4 Findings

Rumplestiltskin is a round character whose arc fluctuates between good and evil throughout the series, but certain patterns emerge in his behavior. In 3.4.1, I summarize the scene functions and discuss how the type of scene affects his actions. In 3.4.2, I determine what are his main character traits based on my material and discuss whether they change or remain static.

### 3.4.1 Scene Functions

My material consists of 19 kernel scenes, where Rumplestiltskin chooses either a good or an evil way to act in the situation. I analyzed how the scenes are placed in the episode's narrative, and I categorized each scene's function according to the Scene Function Model. The scene functions are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Kernel scene functions

	Rumplestiltskin	The Beast	Mr. Gold
Disturbance			
Obstacle			
Complication			2
Confrontation	1	1	1
Crisis	4	3	1
Resolution	2	2	3

Majority of the aforementioned scenes can be categorized as either *crisis* or *resolution* scenes in the plot. *Crisis* scenes show the climax of the plot, where the opposing sides are in conflict. A typical case of a *crisis* scene shows a battle between adversaries. (Porter et al. 2002: 10) In my material, three scenes can be analyzed like this: Rumplestiltskin's confrontation with Milah and Hook; his confrontation with Robin Hood; and the final battle between Rumpel and Peter Pan. Rumplestiltskin has an upper hand in all of these scenes due to his power, but the only one whose life he spares is Robin Hood, a total stranger to him. The ones who he kills are his father and his ex-wife, people whom he used to love but who hurt and mistreated him gravely. Even though family is important to Rumplestiltskin, he still avenges with death the family members who betray him.

The remaining five *crisis* scenes show Rumplestiltskin's inner conflict, where the battle is inside his own mind. In the subchapter 3.1, when he lives in the hut with Baelfire, each

*crisis* scene shows a struggle inside his head. He is depicted as an insecure person then, and even when he acquires the power, he does not feel confident with it yet. The first scene presents Rumple's conflict between dying and staying alive for his son. Instead of dying as a war hero, he chooses cowardice, but he also chooses family. In a later scene, Rumple kills the Dark One. However, the battle is not between him and Zoso, but it is an inner challenge for Rumple to find the courage and take an extreme measure to save his son. Moreover, a *crisis* occurs when Rumple uses magic to bring Baelfire back home without asking him. Again, this is Rumplestiltskin's inner conflict against the fear of rejection and loneliness. Lastly, a conflict is shown in a scene where Rumplestiltskin chooses magic over his own son, letting Baelfire fall through the portal alone. He is so contained by his power that he makes a decision that he regrets ever since. Furthermore, the only *crisis* scene from the subsequent subchapters showing the inner conflict is a scene where Rumplestiltskin shares a kiss with Belle. He has been numbing his feelings for a long time and falling in love brings the inner conflict to him. All of the decisions that he makes in the abovementioned scenes bring unwanted consequences to Rumplestiltskin's life.

The second biggest category of scene functions is *resolution*, which is typically the last scene of the plotline in the episode and shows how the character reacts to the preceding events and to the outcome of the crisis (Porter et al: 2002: 10). In my material, the *resolution* scenes fulfill four different purposes for Rumplestiltskin's arc. The scenes where he becomes the Dark One and slaughters all the king's men and where he kills Zelena show that his final reaction to the preceding events is revenge. In both episodes, Rumple has been mistreated prior to this, and therefore, his reaction is expected, as he has the tendency for revenge. In the second category of *resolution* scenes, Rumplestiltskin makes a selfish decision which affects the people whom he loves. This is seen in the scenes where Baelfire is disappointed in Rumple after he uses magic to control his son against his wish, and where Rumple shuts Belle out of his life. Both episodes show Rumple's insecurity and doubts about whether anyone could truly love him. He makes the decision for others because he is afraid of their answer, although both Baelfire and Belle tell him that given the chance to decide for themselves, they would have chosen to stay with Rumplestiltskin.

*Resolution* is generally the scene that restores the balance to the protagonists' lives, when the episodic plotline reaches its conclusion and the problem is solved (Porter et al. 2002: 10). Rumplestiltskin is presented as an unfortunate soul, whose plots do not end happily too often. Two scenes in my material fulfill Rumplestiltskin's power lust and give him an advantage to control events. In these scenes, he makes a deal with Regina who promises that he will be a powerful person in the new land, and he brings magic to Storybrooke. Even though Rumplestiltskin gets the resolution he wants, he has merely his own self-interest in mind. One *resolution* scene deviates from this. In it, Mr. Gold finally finds the courage to be honest with Belle and tell her the truth about his actions and fears. He chooses goodness in order to save his relationship and receives a happy ending to the plotline by stepping out of his comfort zone.

It is notable how none of the scenes takes place in the beginning of the episode. *Disturbance* and *obstacle* function as scenes where the problem that needs to be overcome, as well as the opponent, are introduced (Porter et al. 2002: 9–10). In the beginning of an episode, Rumplestiltskin is a static character whose arc continues as it was in the end of the previous episode. The action scenes and his reactions to them shape his character arc the most. Both of the *complication* scenes show him lying to Belle who tries to talk him out of vengeance. He chooses dishonesty and it serves as a prelude to his succeeding actions in the episode, when he attempts to murder the people who have deceived him. Lastly, each subchapter has one *confrontation* scene, of which each serves a different purpose and no pattern unites them.

If a character often chooses the same line of action in similar situations, the function of the scene in a plotline may allow the viewers to infer how he or she would act in the given scene. Even though Rumplestiltskin is a complex character whose behavior is not always predictable, his decisions in similar kernel scenes resemble each other. Television serials offer stimuli in kernel scenes, and the characters' decisions on how to react and tackle the challenges shape their arc and provide opportunities for character development.

### 3.4.2 Character Traits

From a humble and timid villager to a power-seeking immortal villain, Rumpelstiltskin's character can be said to contain several personas merged in one, which is also seen in the fact that the character is created based on three different fairy tale evildoers. During the first three seasons, he proves himself as a round character, who has several descriptive character traits (Forster 2002: 4–5, 55). In this chapter, I discuss Rumpelstiltskin's most predominant traits and their development.

It is mentioned many times in the series that Rumpelstiltskin is a coward and that does not change no matter what he does. He is carrying the stigma due to his father's reputation since the childhood as an orphan. To survive through life, he wishes to be as unnoticeable as possible and stay out of harm's way, and thus, he accepts silently all the injustice that he faces because he is too afraid to defend himself. This changes when he acquires the dark powers. He finds the courage to act, but he can still be seen as a coward who is afraid to face problems and handle them. Instead of running away, he destroys everything that comes to his way. Rumpelstiltskin manages to cause havoc without hesitation or guilt, but feelings distract him when he meets Belle. He retracts back to cowardice by running away from his feelings towards her. Even though he never fully manages to escape the cowardice, he learns to take more risks. Slowly, Rumpelstiltskin learns to trust the people whom he loves enough to show his true emotions. Ultimately, he overcomes even the fear of death in order to sacrifice himself for his family. However, it can be argued that the trait never leaves him, and he hides behind the power because he is indeed too scared to show his inner feelings.

One of Rumpelstiltskin's most distinctive traits is his desire to gain more and more power, which does not end even when he is already the most powerful person in the realm. However, when living in the village, he does not dream of wealth or status; instead, he wishes to have a peaceful life with his family. Everything changes when he gains the possession of the dagger, which makes him believe that no one is able to prevent him from creating the life that he wants. Gradually, the lust for power grows into an addiction, which causes Rumpelstiltskin to make the biggest mistake of his life: losing his son, when

Baelfire wishes to separate Rumple from his magic. Even when living in Storybrooke without magic, he uses his status to scare other residents. Given the first chance, he brings magic to Storybrooke, “because magic is power” (Mr. Gold, *Once Upon a Time* #1.22). Lust for power is a trait that Rumpelstiltskin did not have earlier, but it becomes one of his most dominant features, and the trait which brings him the most trouble, as he faces difficult decisions where he needs to choose between power and family.

After he gains the dark powers, Rumpelstiltskin becomes extremely vengeful. It is a trait that he was not showing earlier, when he accepted the mocking without standing up to himself. However, he begins to avenge all the people who have wronged him in the past, and to maintain his reputation, he kills people even for the slightest mistreatment towards him. He extends the revenge even to Milah, the mother of his son, who left him for another man. In Storybrooke, Mr. Gold continues to maintain the reputation and controls the other characters with fear. Nonetheless, the trait diminishes in Storybrooke, when Gold ceases to hurt innocent people. Instead, he focuses his vindictiveness only for those who have betrayed him badly. These include Regina, who kept Belle imprisoned for decades; Zelena, who kept Gold imprisoned; and Peter Pan, who kidnapped Henry. Therefore, his actions can be interpreted as more justified, when he targets his vengeance only to those who have wronged him first.

As a powerful trickster, Rumpelstiltskin manipulates people as he pleases. He learns the manipulation skill from the previous Dark One who tricks Rumple into killing him. Most of the events shown in the first season are part of his scheme to find his son, although it is not explicit to the other characters. Even the curse is part of Rumpelstiltskin’s plan, but by getting Regina to cast it, once the curse is broken, she gets the blame. When Rumple fulfills his mission and is reunited with Baelfire, he does not continue manipulating the bigger picture to the same extent, but he continues to be an untrustworthy character. As can be seen in several scenes, Rumpelstiltskin is unreliable even towards his loved ones. He lies to Belle more than once about not seeking for revenge, and he tricks her even at the same moment when he proposes to her. Even though he learns to be more honest with the people around him, he does not manage to get rid of the trait of unreliability.

It is clear from the beginning that family plays an important role in Rumplestiltskin's life. He dreams of starting a family with Milah, and upon hearing of Milah's pregnancy, he is willing to sacrifice the ability to walk in order to be alive to raise his son. When Baelfire is called to the front, Rumple's initial thought is the fear of loneliness if his son will be taken away from him, and again, he resorts to desperate actions to stay with his family. Nevertheless, Rumplestiltskin's selfish actions cause him to lose his son. This functions as a turning point in Rumplestiltskin's arc, and since then, he works with one goal in mind: finding Baelfire. However, his actions cause harm to numerous other characters, for example, when the fairy tale characters are cursed away from their homes or when Gold brings magic to Storybrooke. He justifies his actions by fighting for a good cause, but he does not care who gets hurt in the middle. In the end, Gold finds Baelfire and has his forgiveness, and he proves that he can be a better father than his own father was to him. Family or love is the reason behind the majority of the decisions that Rumplestiltskin needs to make in my material, but recurrently he chooses himself and his own wishes over his loved ones. Regardless of this, family-orientation continues as one of his most notable traits, even though he uses a great deal of questionable methods to stay with his family.

Whether Rumplestiltskin chooses good or evil in his actions, he mostly acts for his own advantage and rarely does good deeds without getting something back for himself. Even though he is one of the main villains in the series, he constantly assists the heroes in their quests. In the Enchanted Forest, Rumplestiltskin makes deals to help the residents to overcome their problems. In Storybrooke, whenever a new villain arrives in town, Mr. Gold provides magical objects and offers valuable assistance to the heroes. Therefore, he is an extremely complex character, who deviates from the traditional norms of evilness.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

Even though *Once Upon a Time* is created based on well-known fairy tale characters, it modifies their stories to the extent where the boundaries between good and evil characters become obscure. The series is rich with characters who undergo change from a hero to a villain and vice versa, and Rumplestiltskin is an example of this. The character of Rumplestiltskin takes its inspiration from three fairy tale villains, who are not entirely evil and even assists the heroes in their stories, and the same pattern is repeated in his actions as well.

In this thesis, I studied kernel scenes where Rumplestiltskin chooses either a good or an evil way to act in the situation. In 14 out of 19 scenes, he makes a decision where he chooses either keeping his powers or gaining more power, or the usage of power to do bad deeds. However, power only brings him loneliness, as whenever he chooses power, his loved ones drift further away from him. On the other hand, doing what he thinks is the right thing does not always end well either: his wife leaves him after he escapes the war, and to beat his father, he has to kill himself. The circumstances in his life and the society around him have a strong influence on Rumplestiltskin's arc that makes him a villain.

Furthermore, I studied the narrative structure of the episodes based on the Scene Function Model. I learned that most of the scenes in my material function as either *crisis* or *resolution* scenes in the plot. Certain patterns emerge in Rumplestiltskin's behavior in scenes with the same function, and he chooses the same stance, such as revenge or lying to the loved ones, in similar situations. It is also notable that in a large number of the scenes, Rumplestiltskin's only adversary is himself, as he experiences an inner conflict between his priorities about power and family.

My study is narrow due to the limited amount of material and could be expanded to include a larger variety of scenes and more seasons. There is a great deal of studies of villains in movies and television programs, but there are always new aspects for research. For instance, the correlation of the narrative structure and character arc has not been



studied to a great extent. The majority of the villains in *Once Upon a Time* are round characters and their background is presented to the viewers, and the development of their traits could be studied further.

Rumplestiltskin is a versatile character whose arc is colorful, and as can be seen from the abovementioned scenes, he is an unfortunate soul who makes too many wrong decisions. These make him change into a villain, and his constantly growing lust for power makes him the most manipulative and unpredictable character in the series. As Rumplestiltskin himself would say, all magic comes with a price; in his case, the price of magic is becoming a villain.

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## Appendix 1. Family tree of the main characters

